

Rivers

Few things in nature impact us as the river. Throughout time the river has been written about in song, poem, and story. The illustrations one can glean from watching a river run its course are countless. Normally, rivers are a thing of beauty and enjoyment. In earlier times they were the main route of transportation, and towns and cities were built along their shores so that life could flourish and be sustained. Their broad, cool banks have been the place where we relax and renew. Our industry and livelihood have taken root there.



How heartbreaking to see in recent months the devastation brought on by flooding in various locations throughout the world. Those who live near the water's edge are helpless to hold back the expanding flow. While many attempt to temporarily divert the path of the water, no one can halt it completely. In spite of man's attempts to control rivers, the water rises periodically and demonstrates the superiority of nature. If one manages to keep the river at bay, there remains residual damage to property and structures in the form of mold, mildew and unstable foundations. Yet all the while, those who are impacted the most by the river's devastation stand in awe of the sight as the mighty flow of water takes authority and precedence over their lives. It is not unusual to hear onlookers comment on the power – and even the beauty – of the onslaught of water.

When a river overflows its banks, it takes everything in its path and washes it away. So it should be with the Spirit of God flowing in us. To be emptied of the "stuff" in our hearts and minds, and be filled with new Living Water is something that should happen to us over and over. For a time, we may mourn the loss of what has washed away, but eventually, the beauty and power of the River in us make us victorious.

Oswald Chambers, in his collection of devotionals called "My Utmost for His Highest", makes the point that Christian faith is rooted in events. As we journey through life, one day – one moment at a time, the experiences that God affords to us, and the natural occurrences of life around and IN us, are the source of revelation regarding faith. Using the river as an illustration, he says, *"A river is victoriously persistent; it overcomes all barriers. For a while it goes steadily on its course, then it comes to an obstacle and for*

a while it is baulked, but it soon makes a pathway round the obstacle. Or, a river may drop out of sight for miles and presently emerge again broader and grander than ever!"

"The river of the Spirit of God overcomes all obstacles. You can see God using some lives, but into your life an obstacle has come and you seem to be of no use. Keep paying attention to the Source and God will either take you around the obstacle or remove it. Never look at the obstacle or on the difficulty. Keep your eyes on Jesus. The obstacle is a matter of indifference to the river which will continue to flow as it pleases. Don't allow anything to come between you and Christ; no emotion, or experience; nothing must keep you from the one great sovereign Source."

God continually opens marvelous truths to our minds. Every point He has opened is an indication of the wider power of the river that He will flow through us.

Clearly the author of the hymn, *Like a River Glorious*, Francis R. Havergal, knew and understood rivers. The three verses of the song speak to the breadth, depth and width of God's peace and protection available to those who believe in Him:

Like a river glorious is God's perfect peace;
Over all victorious, in its bright increase.
Perfect yet it floweth, fuller every day;
Perfect yet it groweth, deeper all the way.

In the Bible, John 7:38 says "Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."

If you do not feel the rivers of God flowing in your life, take time now to speak to Him. Ask him to first wash away the sin that separates us from having a loving relationship with Him. Then seek the living water – from the well that never runs dry; from the mighty river of life found in Christ Jesus.

¹"My Utmost for His Highest" Oswald Chambers, Barbour and Company, Inc. Westwood NJ p.183-184